

Edward Wigglesworth

1880. & 66.35

Mr. *Wigglesworth's*

LECTURE

On the Death

OF THE

Hon. Dr. *Winthrop.*

Mr. Wigglesworth

LETTER

On the Birth

of the

Hon. Dr. Whitrop

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY.

A DISCOURSE

Occasioned by the Death

OF THE HONORABLE

JOHN WINTHROP, Esq; LL.D. and F.R.S.

Hollis Professor of Mathematics

AND

Natural Philosophy

AT

Cambridge, New-England :

DELIVERED

AT

A PUBLIC LECTURE

IN

HARVARD COLLEGE.

By *Edward Wigglesworth*, A. M.

Hollis Professor of Divinity.

Published at the Request of the Students.

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND:

Printed by T. and J. FLEET, in Cornhill,

MDCCLXXIX.

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The Hope of Immortality.

PETER i. 3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

TO pass without duly noticing, and making proper reflections on that mournful dispensation, by which this Society is deprived of one of its greatest ornaments and most useful instructors, would indicate a want of respect to the Memory of the Honorable Doctor WINTHROP, and an inattention to the admonition of God's holy providence.

Doctor WINTHROP is here no more ! Death has put a period to all the philosophical disquisitions of that great and eminent person ! The Students of this House can now, no longer, be guided by his skillful hand in their researches into the laws of nature ! Nor can they be led by him to the knowledge of God, the great author and preserver of the universe ! To the knowledge of that God, who with unerring wisdom and infinite goodness hath established those laws by which not only the earth

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on which we dwell, but the sun, moon and stars have been upheld in being, and preserved in order and harmony amidst their various revolutions; and by which they will continue to be so, till time shall be no more! Those who have been associated with him in the government of this society, and in the direction of its most important concerns, can no longer be aided by his wife and judicious counsels!

On this occasion, a *stoical apathy* ought not to be indulged. It would indicate great obduracy of heart, and a total insensibility of the loss we have sustained. Christianity means not to eradicate the human passions: It only designs to moderate, direct and govern them. It becomes us all, then, to be deeply affected by this sorrowful dispensation of divine Providence. But though sorrow hath filled our hearts; yet we ought not to sorrow, as others who have no hope. We must not give way to excessive grief, as the Gentiles frequently did, who were not favoured with the christian revelation, and had no "sure and certain hope" of a glorious resurrection to an happy immortality. Thanks be to God! that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.—The great and distinguishing doctrine of our holy religion, the doctrine of life and immortality is now illustrated and made plain: The doubts and uncertainties, in which it was involved, are now dispelled; and to the world evident proof and strict demonstration is now actually given of the certainty of a future life and an happy immortality. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away; being reserved in heaven for them, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

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The portion of sacred scripture, taken for the subject of our meditations at this time, will naturally lead us to contemplate one of the peculiar privileges, with which Christians are highly favoured, and by which they are distinguished, not only from the heathen world, but from God's ancient *Israel*.

By the "lively," or "living" hope, as the word *ζῶσαν* properly signifies, to which Christians are regenerated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is intended either a hope which makes us "lively" and "active" in the discharge of the duties of our christian profession, "rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God." In this sense, the members of Christ's spiritual house are said to be "living stones"; and in the same, we are commanded to offer our bodies, a "living sacrifice."—Or by a "living" hope may be meant an hope "that giveth life." Texts are not wanting, where the term is used in such a sense. "Living water" is put for water that giveth life. The "living bread," that came down from heaven, was such bread that, if a man did eat thereof, he should live forever. The "lively oracles" were those, which if a man observed, he should live by them.—Or else by the "living hope" must be understood the very hope of IMMORTAL LIFE itself. This last interpretation accords with one, at least, of the ancient manuscripts, the *Syriac* version, and the comment of some of the *Fathers*: And it fully expresses, as I humbly conceive, the sense of the Apostle. For, though christians, at their natural birth, are born to die; yet, on their being regenerated by the gospel, they are raised to the hope of a blessed and happy immortality.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is the foundation of this the christian's joyful hope. The Jews, while they were under the law, and had no other hopes than what they derived from the sanctions of it, had
nothing

nothing to expect but death without mercy, when they became willful transgressors. As to the heathen, they were, through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage. Till Christ arose from the dead, death and corruption were ever before mens eyes. No person had ever been known to rise to an immortal life. But as God hath raised up Jesus from the dead, and promised a resurrection of all men by him; the resurrection of Christ becomes to the christian, not only a demonstration of the mighty power of God, but a pledge of the resurrection of all men, and an earnest of an happy immortality to all the faithful servants of God.

How great reason, then, is there for our joining with the Apostle, in blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his abundant mercy, hath raised us up to the hope of immortality; and hath brought to light a future state of glory and felicity, in so clear and express a manner, by the gospel?

To impress our minds the more deeply with a sense of the obligation we are under to God and the Redeemer for this glorious discovery, let us in the first place take a survey of the heathen world, before the light of the gospel shone upon it.

The heathen, 'tis true, had some confused notions, and pretty general expectations, of a life after death. The natural arguments for the immortality of the soul, and those of a moral nature for a future state of retribution, when duly considered, are of great weight. Both these kinds of arguments, however, have been treated, by christian philosophers and divines, in a manner vastly superior to what had ever been done by the most eminent of the heathen, who flourished before the christian era.

It has been clearly evinced that matter, however modified, so far as we are capable of judging from its known properties, is incapable of thought: That a substance compounded of innumerable parts, cannot be the subject of an individual consciousness: That intellect and will are of a nature, entirely different from corporeal figure and motion: And that the sublime faculties of the human mind, by which it has a power of rising above material and temporal objects, and contemplating things divine and spiritual, afford a strong presumption that the soul is of a nature, quite different from the body; and that the soul may continue to exist, while the body is mouldering in the dust.

When we add to these considerations, the strong apprehensions of a future state, that are so natural to the human mind, which are not to be discerned in any of the inferior animals; the presumption grows stronger, that the author of our nature designed we should be governed by the hopes and fears of a world to come. For it cannot be reconciled with any idea, we can frame, of his unerring wisdom and infinite goodness, to suppose that he designed and formed us to be governed by a lie.

The moral arguments for a future state of retribution, drawn from the seemingly unequal dispensations of Providence, give very great additional force to these reasonings. For, how can we, otherwise, reconcile the many evils and calamities, to which the best of men are often subjected in this life, with the infinite benevolence of the Deity? Or, can we reconcile it with his unerring wisdom, that many of the vilest and most abandoned of mankind should continue to flourish in prosperity to the very end of their lives?

But notwithstanding, that from these reasonings we should be apt to conclude, that the present is not the

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only life, for which man is designed; and that there will be a future state of retribution, in which the virtuous and good will be amply rewarded, and the vicious and wicked properly punished: Yet, it must be confessed that there are difficulties on the other side, which, if men were left to themselves, without the assistance of divine revelation, might raise doubts in their minds, and very much weaken the belief of this great and important truth.

However, the belief of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of existence, obtained in the earliest ages, of which we have any notice in history. It equally prevailed in the barbarous and in the civilized nations. So that a celebrated infidel of modern times hath been forced to acknowledge, that "the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, began to be taught before we have any light into antiquity. And when we begin to have any, we find it established: That it was strongly inculcated from times immemorial, and as early as the most ancient and learned nations appear to us."

The most probable account to be given, of the great antiquity and universal prevalence of these opinions, is that they were part of the primitive religion, communicated by divine revelation to the first parents of mankind: And that from them, they were conveyed, by tradition, to their posterity through their various dispersions. For how natural and easy soever we may suppose it to be, that mankind should, by their hopes and fears, or by a consideration of the noble powers and faculties of the human mind, be led to conclude that they were immortal and accountable; yet we find in fact that these opinions were embraced by the people at large, before ever their wise men and philosophers had made them the subject of their disquisitions.

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From whatever source these opinions were derived, it might reasonably have been hoped, that a doctrine so useful to mankind, and so consonant to right reason, would have acquired new strength, in those ages when learning and philosophy came to be cultivated. The fact, however, was otherwise. For many of the philosophers, who pretended to more wisdom and penetration than the vulgar, quitted the ancient traditions. And while they affected to be guided by the pure dictates of reason, they rejected the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and a future state; exploding both one and the other as vulgar errors, unworthy to be embraced by men of sense. And it hath been the professed tenet of one whole sect of philosophers, that the soul died with the body. Others, indeed, who did not run that length, represent the doctrine as altogether uncertain; and as not having any solid foundation to support it. So various and contradictory were their sentiments concerning the nature of the soul, that no conclusive arguments could be deduced from them, in proof of its immortality.

This is a just representation of the sentiments of one class of the greatest sages of antiquity. But this notwithstanding, there were others among the ancients, who were ready to catch at every thing that bore the least shadow of an argument, in order to confirm their belief in a point so interesting and important.

PYTHAGORAS has the honour to be enrolled among the most eminent and ancient of the philosophers, who professed to believe and teach the immortality of the soul. But his doctrine on this head does not well accord with a state of future rewards and punishments.

SOCRATES believed the immortality of the soul and a future state, and endeavoured in an argumentative manner to prove their reality. His sentiments on this head are fully represented by his disciple PLATO, in

the account he has given of the discourse SOCRATES had with his friends on the last day of his life. In conversation with those who visited him at that time, he declared that, did he not think that he was going to the wise and good Gods, and to men who had departed this life and were better than those who were then living on the earth, it would be wrong in him not to be troubled at the prospect of death. "But know assuredly, said he to his friends, that *I hope* I am now going to good men; **THOUGH THIS I WOULD NOT TAKE UPON ME PEREMPTORILY TO ASSERT:** But that I go to the Gods, Lords that are absolutely good, this, *if I can affirm any thing of this kind*, I would certainly affirm. And for this reason I do not take it ill that I am to die, as otherwise I should do; but am in good hope that there is something remaining for those that are dead; and that (as hath been said of old) it will then be much better for good than for bad men." The happiness to be enjoyed in a future state, he regarded as the special privilege of those persons only, who had a strong thirst after knowledge, and had addicted themselves to philosophy. With respect to the bulk of mankind, he held the transmigration of souls. Those of the vicious, after having hovered a while in a disconsolate condition around the sepulchres of the dead, he apprehended would pass into the bodies of animals of like dispositions with themselves. Persons, who were not philosophers, that had exercised justice and temperance, he supposed would be indulged with the privilege, either of animating the bodies of animals of a superior class; or, at most, of returning again to the labours and sorrows of a mortal life.—How weak must these motives have been esteemed by the bulk of mankind? What little influence must they have had, to enforce the practice of virtue, when the faithful discharge of duty was attended with peculiar and trying difficulties?

difficulties? How weak and ineffectual must have been his dissuasive from vice, when the most the wicked had to dread was their being thrust into the bodies of animals suited to their own natures; in which they would have an opportunity of gratifying their darling appetites to the full?

When **SOCRATES** made his apology to his judges, he expressed his hope that it would be better for him that he was to be put to death. He told his judges, as *Cicero* represents it, "*Id unum cogitare verum esse, nec eniquam bono mali quicquam evenire posse, nec vivo, nec mortuo; nec unquam ejus res a Diis immortalibus negligentur.*" This one thing, said he, ought to be considered as a certain truth, that no evil can befall a good man, either in life or in death, neither shall his affairs ever be neglected by the immortal Gods.—Is not this the utmost hope, to which man can ever attain, by the mere light of reason, without the aid of divine revelation?

What has been said of **SOCRATES** may, with propriety, be applied to his most eminent disciple **PLATO**. The dialogues, in which he introduces his master discoursing concerning the immortality of the soul and a future state, are justly regarded as containing his own sentiments. From them, as well as his other discourses, it plainly appears that he not only endeavoured to convince others of the immortality of the soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments, but he had a strong expectation of them himself. But it ought to be remembered that neither he, nor his master, so much as pretend to have discovered these important truths, merely by the force of their own reason. On the contrary, they frequently represent these things as matters of very ancient tradition, which they endeavoured to support and strengthen by rational arguments. It must be further observed, that, though both of them believed, in general, there would be a difference made in a future state between

between good and bad men, the one rewarded, and the other punished, in a greater or less degree; yet by sometimes mixing the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and at others by talking very waveringly and uncertainly about them, they greatly obscured the doctrines themselves, and weakened the arguments they had adduced in proof of them. And it is worthy remark, that though many sects of philosophers professed to derive their original from SOCRATES, yet few of them taught the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution, as doctrines of their schools. Many of them treated these subjects as matters of absolute uncertainty.

CICERO may justly be numbered among the most eminent of the ancients, who endeavoured to prove the immortality of the soul. He does it not only in some few detached passages of his works, but has attempted the proof at large, in one of the most valuable pieces of antiquity. He argues it from the nature of the soul, and from its uncompound and indivisible essence, which is quite different from any material elements; from the wonderful powers and faculties of the soul, which have in them something divine, and incompatible with sluggish matter; and from the ardent thirst after immortality, natural to the human mind, which is most conspicuous in those persons, who, by their researches after knowledge, are the most exalted above the common level of mankind. In expectation of this desirable event, he felicitated himself with the prospect of enjoying, in a future state, the conversation and friendship of those worthies, who had acted their part on the stage of life, with honour to themselves and great benefit to the public. A prospect of these things occasioned him to express, with rapture, this his joyful expectation. "O præclarum diem!" says he in his treatise concerning old age, cum
d "ad illum divinum animorum concilium cœtumque proficiscar! cumque ex hac turba et colluvione discedam!
 "proficiscar enim non ad eos solum viros, de quibus ante
 "dixi;

“dixi; sed ad Catonem meum, quo nemo vir melior natus
 “est, nemo pietate præstantior!”—O auspicious day! when
 I shall depart from the mixed multitude here below, and
 ascend to the divine assembly and councils of unembodied
 spirits! For I shall then ascend not only to those eminent
 persons, of whom I have been speaking, but to my friend
 CATO himself! the most excellent and pious person,
 that ever was born!—But this joyful expectation,
 founded on his fond desires, appears not to have been
 supported by such cogent arguments, as fully convinced
 him, that the souls of men would actually be immortal.
 While writing on the subject, he evidently appears to be
 highly gratified with the prospect of the happiness to be
 enjoyed after death. But notwithstanding the satisfaction
 he received from contemplating the subject, and though
 he had endeavoured to establish the truth of the doctrine,
 by the most conclusive arguments he had any acquaint-
 ance with; yet he plainly discovers that his mind did
 not rest fully satisfied by any of the arguments which
 had been alledged by him. For he soon goes on to
 say; “*Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos im-*
 “*mortales esse credam, lubenter erro:*
 “*Nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, ex-*
 “*torqueri volo. Sin mortuus, ut quidem minuti*
 “*philosophi censent, nihil sentiam; non vereor,*
 “*ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant.*”
 —But if I am mistaken in thinking that the souls of
 men are immortal, I am very willing to remain under
 the mistake. I am determined never to suffer this delu-
 sion to be wrested from me. But if in fact it should
 prove the case, that death reduces me to a state of perfect
 insensibility, as some little philosophers suppose, I am not
 apprehensive of being derided by them, after death hath
 also annihilated them.—After all their reasonings on
 the subject, it is very evident that the most strenuous
 advocates, among the ancients, for the immortality of the
 soul and a future state of retribution, did not pretend

to any absolute certainty about these subjects. In all their disputations and discourses, which were designed to fortify themselves, or others, against the fear of death; as also in all their consolatory discourses on the death of deceased friends, they proceeded on one of these alternatives: That death is either a translation to a better state; or an utter extinction of being; or, at least, a state of insensibility. With this consideration even **SOCRATES** comforted himself under the prospect of death. In like manner, **CICERO**'s whole discourse, which was written with the professed design of fortifying men against the fear of death, turns on this alternative: "*Si supremus ille dies non extinctionem, sed commutationem adfert loci, quid optabilius? Sin autem perimit ac delet omnino, quid melius quam in mediis vitæ laboribus obdormiscere, et ita conviventem somno consopiri sempiterno?*"—That if the day of our death brings not with it an extinction of our being, but only a change of our abode, nothing can be more desirable: But if it absolutely destroys and puts an end to our very existence, what can be better than, amidst the labours and troubles of this life, to rest in profound and eternal sleep?

These were the strongest consolations, with which those persons, who were not favoured with a divine revelation, were able to support themselves under the sorrows and calamities of life! And by these considerations alone were they able to fortify themselves against the natural fear of death! Eternal life was not, by any of the ancient philosophers, so much as ever deemed to be the great reward of every holy and righteous person.

With respect to the resurrection of the dead, none of those who professed to believe the immortality of the soul, had so much as the least expectation of it. Some of the ancient philosophers stiled the body **THE PRISON OF THE SOUL**, and thought it a great hindrance to knowledge

knowledge and virtue. They accordingly esteemed the hope of a resurrection VILE, ABOMINABLE and IMPOSSIBLE; an hope fitter for WORMS than for men. And when ST. PAUL preached JESUS and the RESURRECTION at *Athens*, some *Epicurean* and *Stoic* philosophers encountered him; and in derision enquired, WHAT WILL THIS BABBLER SAY?

Let us now shift the scene, and take a cursory view of God's ancient people the *Jews*. Whatever could be learned of a future state by the mere light of unassisted reason, that and much more was known to them. ENOCH and ELIJAH had been translated without seeing death. This translation was the testimony of Heaven, respecting the divine acceptance of these holy persons. Concerning ENOCH, it is expressly asserted in the *mosaic* history, that he WALKED WITH GOD. For this reason GOD TOOK HIM to himself; and thereby gave to the *antediluvian* world evident proof of his approbation of virtue and piety; as also, of the reality of a future state of recompence. "Before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God." The passages, however, of the Old Testament, in which a future state of existence is revealed, are comparatively but few, and those but thinly scattered in some particular parts of it. Many of these are covered with so much obscurity, that they are capable of a different interpretation, and have accordingly been actually interpreted of *temporal* promises by some learned and pious Christians. The sanctions of the *mosaic* law respected only the things of this life. For that reason, one whole sect among the *Jews*, namely, the SADDUCEES, did not believe the reality of a future state of recompence: They went so far as to deny the very existence, either of angels or spirits. But though their sentiments were far from being adopted by the generality of the people; and though

the certainty of a future life may fairly be inferred from some passages of the scriptures of the Old Testament, yet there are other passages, and those expressive of the sentiments of persons remarkable for their piety, which at first view would seem strongly to militate against an intermediate, or final state of retribution. "The dead, says the Psalmist, cannot praise thee, neither any that go down into silence." King HEZEKIAH, in his song of thanksgiving, after recovery from a dangerous sickness, expresses these sentiments. "The grave cannot praise thee, O Lord; they that go down to the pit cannot hope in thy truth." And holy Job, in the anguish of his spirit, and in the bitterness of his soul, complained, that "as the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away; so he, that goeth down to the grave, shall COME UP NO MORE."

But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, by the Gospel, the veil is drawn back, which in so great a manner hid the future world from the eyes of the saints of old. The Son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, has, in the most full and explicit manner, revealed to the Christian church all those things, concerning a future and immortal life, which were only intimated to God's ancient people. The proofs of a future state are not to be deduced from a few texts, but thinly scattered through the New-Testament: For there is not a book; nor (may I not say) scarcely a single chapter, in which this great and distinguishing doctrine is not expressly taught. The passages in the New-Testament, relative to this subject, are so clear and explicit, that there is no room for the most ignorant to misunderstand them; or for the most impious to pervert them. And there is not a single one, which does in the least militate against this important doctrine.

The Scriptures of the New-Testament do assure us, in the most explicit manner, that "God now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed

a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." At that time "God will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath." Tribulation and anguish will be the portion of every man that doth evil: But glory, honour and peace will be the reward of every one that worketh good; "for there is no respect of persons with God."—"When the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God, the dead in Christ shall rise." And then that which was sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption: That which was sown in dishonour will be raised in glory: That which was sown in weakness will be raised in power: That which was sown a natural body will be raised a spiritual body! And when the dead are raised, those who remain alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And both one and the other "will be ever with the Lord."

When the saints are raised up to glory, they will be freed from every thing that gave them trouble and sorrow in this life: They will be put into the possession of as much happiness as they are qualified to enjoy: They will no longer see as through a glass darkly; but the great mysteries of Creation, Providence and Redemption will be laid fully open to their view: And this will fill them with adoring admiration of the divine power, wisdom and goodness, which are made manifest by all the works of God. They will then commence inhabitants of Mount *Sion*, the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the city of the living God: They will be admitted to the presence of an innumerable company of Angels; to the general assembly.

assembly and church of the first-born ; to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant ; and to God, the judge of all. They will be completely happy in celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb for ever and ever.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ! To the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ! being reserved in heaven for them, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation !

These reflections, my young friends, were suggested by the death of our *christian philosopher*. A long acquaintance with DR. WINTHROP hath fully convinced me, that he esteemed "divine revelation," the only foundation, on which "the hope of immortality" can be firmly supported. For that reason I have made choice "of the hope of immortality," as the most suitable for a religious improvement of his death. In handling this subject, I have endeavoured, notwithstanding my brevity, to state the natural and moral arguments for a future state, in their full strength. From what the most renowned sages of antiquity have transmitted on this very interesting and important subject, it plainly appears that none of them rested fully satisfied with any of the arguments they were able to adduce in support of a doctrine, which they were desirous of placing on a firm foundation. Their minds were beclouded with fearful apprehensions "of falling into nought." The only consolation, with which they could support themselves under the prospect of death, was that death would, either introduce them to an abode of happiness ; or else put an END TO THEIR VERY EXISTENCE — that they should rest in PROFOUND AND ETERNAL SLEEP. — Blessed be God ! Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.

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It may, perhaps, be expected that I should, on this occasion, attempt to delineate the features of your late philosophical instructor. But instead of drawing his portrait anew, I shall take the freedom to copy one, which has already been exhibited to public view: A portrait, in which, I think, there is a just, though faint resemblance of the great original.

DOCTOR WINTHROP,* having received the regular honours of this Society, was in 1738 seated in the Professor's chair; being then but in the 24th year of his age. In a very short time, the accuracy of his astronomical observations spread his fame through Europe, and demonstrated the propriety of the appointment.† His intellectual

* Doctor Winthrop was born in Boston, on the 19th of December 1714. He departed this life, on the 3d of May 1779. On the Saturday following, the funeral solemnities were attended by a numerous and respectable assembly. The Corps, preceded by the Governors and Students of the College, was borne into the Meeting-House; where Mr. Professor Sewall delivered an elegant English Oration on the melancholy occasion. The reverend President prayed, and the Students sung a well adapted Anthem. A solemnity appeared in every countenance, expressive of the esteem and respect borne to the deceased, and of the most unfeigned sorrow for the loss of so eminent and worthy a person.

† Extract of a letter to the Doctor from one of the Secretaries to the Royal Society, dated London, August 20th 1748.

"Sir, The Royal Society were greatly pleased with your observation of the transit of Mercury over the Sun April 21, 1740, and with your other communications, for which I am desired to return you their thanks, and to beg of you the continuance of your observations.—I am glad to find the Hollisian Chair so well filled, particularly as I knew Mr. Hollis the founder of the Professorship; and as you enjoy it, being one of that illustrious family so eminent in the history of New-England."

¶ In the year 1740, happened a transit of the Planet Mercury over the Sun's disc, visible in the American hemisphere. Dr. WINTHROP, then in the second year of his Professorship, observed it with an accuracy, for which he was distinguished. The observations

tual powers enabled him to penetrate the most difficult branches of science. His attention was unremitted, and his acquisitions proportionate. Besides an intimate acquaintance with the whole circle of science, he gained great knowledge of several of the modern languages of Europe, and was critically skilled in the most eminent of antiquity; especially those in which the sacred scriptures were originally written. In these scriptures he took great delight, and his dying testimony was fully in favour of their authenticity and divine original. The day preceeding his death he expressed himself in the following manner. "I view religion as a matter of very great importance. The wise men of antiquity set themselves to work to prove the reality of a future state. They caught at every thing which had the shadow of probability. They gave a degree of plausibility to the arguments. They were sensible of the need they stood in, of such a doctrine. In opposition to the wise men of antiquity, the wise men of modern times have employed their abilities in undermining every argument, in favour of immortality, and in weakening the only hope that can sustain us. But the light thrown on this matter by the glorious gospel, with me, amounts to demonstration. The hope that is set before us in the new testament, is the only

tions were transmitted to the Royal Society of London, by whom very honorable notice was taken of them and their author. They are recorded in the XLII Vol. of the Transactions of that Society. Respectful mention is also made of them in the Memoirs of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris, for the year 1756, as appears from the following extract."

"Le 2 Mai 1740, à Cambridge dans la nouvelle Angleterre, M. Winthrop observa Mercure sur le Soleil; supposant la différence des Méridiens $4^h 53'$, comme M. de l'Isle me l'a communiquée, le temps moyen de la conjonction vraie à Paris fut le 2 Mai à $10^h 36' 37''$ du soir, la latitude géocentrique $14' 59''$; ainsi le lieu du Soleil étant $1^s 12^d 43' 19''$, le lieu du nœud est $1^s 15^d 15' 0''$, moins avancé de $5' 56''$ que dans les Tables de M. Halley."

J. Sawall Orator

"only thing that will support a man in his dying hour.
 "If any man build on any other foundation, in my apprehension, his foundation will fail."

By the holy scriptures the Doctor regulated his life and conversation, and his manners were amiable in proportion to the attention he bestowed upon them. In every department of life he sustained the character of the Gentleman, the Philosopher, and the Christian. In frequent and distressing sickness, no complaint ever came from his lips. He supported himself with manly fortitude, and a sober serenity, which christianity alone could inspire.

The Royal Society in London, the Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, the University at Edinburgh, and that in this Place, conferred on him the highest literary honours. And the legislature of this State testified their sense of his political abilities, and inflexible integrity, by repeatedly placing him at the Council Board, when the rights of his country were forceably invaded.

Descended from a line of ancestors, † who, ever since the reformation from Popery, had rendered themselves illustrious by their opposition to civil and ecclesiastical tyranny,

† The Doctor's descent was as follows,

1. Adam Winthrop, Esq; Serjeant at Law, Ld. and Patron of Groton in Suffolk, his eldest Son was,
2. Adam Winthrop, Esq; Master of Trinity-Hall, Cambridge; and Vice-Chancellor of that University, his eldest Son was,
3. Adam Winthrop, Esq; of Groton, his eldest Son was,
4. John Winthrop, Esq; of Groton, afterwards Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, who was born the 12th of June 1587, and died at Boston the 26th of March 1649. His fourth Son was,
5. Adam Winthrop, Esq; one of the Council, his eldest Son was,
6. Adam Winthrop, Esq; one of the Council. He died August 1700. His eldest Son was,
7. Adam Winthrop, Esq; one of the Council. He died October 2, 1743. His second Son was,
8. The deceased Professor.

ny, he inherited their virtues. He was uniformly an advocate for the fullest liberty of conscience in all matters purely religious. And on all occasions he strenuously maintained what he justly esteemed, the RIGHTS of his country. For the integrity of his conduct, while a Councillor, he was honoured with a frown from the British Sovereign. That frown he esteemed the greatest honour which a corrupt Court could bestow. When the British authority ceased in America, his country re-instated him at the Council Board.

A WINTHROP, a BOYLE and a NEWTON, who have each immortalized their names by their philosophical researches and discoveries, have all been led, by observing and contemplating the order and harmony of the *natural* world, to admire and adore the infinite power, unerring wisdom and boundless beneficence of its great author. Upon surveying the *moral* world, each of these great philosophers have discovered a mighty chasm, which cannot be filled, but on the admission of a future state of retribution. The christian revelation fills up this mighty chasm, and fully demonstrates that both the *natural* and the *moral* world, are under the same infinitely wise oeconomy.

A critical examination of the evidence of the divine original and authenticity of those scriptures which we esteem sacred, hath fully convinced each of these eminent Philosophers, that those scriptures had no one for their author, but God alone.

May God of his infinite mercy grant, that the same conclusion may be the happy result of your researches; and that your lives may be so influenced by the great hope of the gospel, that you all may be made meet for, and at last be received to glory, honor and immortality. AMEN.



The following Portrait of the Doctor was drawn by a Gentleman of Eminence in an adjacent State, and communicated to a Friend at Boston.

“**I** LAMENT, with Harvard-College, and the whole Republic of Letters, the death of that most learned and excellent man, the great Professor WINTHROP: But he has served his generation honorably and faithfully by the will of God, and has exhibited a noble literary character during the forty years of his professorship, for the imitation of his successors and posterity. He was a star of the first magnitude. He had a perfect knowledge of his profession: I have taken pains, for the gratification of my own curiosity, to enquire into the characters of the most eminent literati now flourishing thro’ Europe; and among others, the greatest *Mathematicians*, *Philosophers* and *Astronomers*—particularly the professors in the British universities, and in the universities of France and Italy, Spain and Germany. I have enquired into the degree of their attainments, and examined into the extent of their literature; and I believe that Dr. WINTHROP surpassed the most, if not all of them; and that he has scarcely left his equal. In some particular things, as in the *electrical branch of experimental philosophy*, others may have gone beyond him: but, he had digested many profound researches of which other *capital* professors were ignorant, or had but a general idea. He had perfectly mastered the most abstruse reasonings of *Newton’s Principia*; he had digested and entirely familiarised the whole erudition of that prince of philosophers; and all the world knows, there are but few of whom this can be said in the present day. The taste for *mathematical* and *philosophical* learning ran high the latter end of the last, and the beginning of the present century. But the constellation, contemporary with *Newton*, is no more. Their successors content themselves with familiarising the discoveries of *Newton* to the capacities of children, petti-maitres and ladies; and those who have but a superficial acquaintance with the elements of mathematics. An elegant and entertaining course of *experimental philosophy* now takes place of those deep and great ratiocinia on the laws of nature; to understand which, great knowledge in *mathematics* is necessary. There are indeed those who go greater lengths; but what I would is this—that few pursue those studies to the extent to which they were pro-

cuted by *Flemstead* and *Halley*. The modern literati infinitely surpass their predecessors in the *belles lettres*. But as to *mathematics*, *natural philosophy* and *astronomy*, tho' to a great degree still remaining, yet are they manifestly declining and growing into desuetude. I hope for the revival of this, as well as the *classical*, and other kinds of literature now too much neglected, and that the learned world will be yet again blessed with it's *Whistons* and *Saundersons*, it's *Halleys* and it's *Winthrops*, instead of it's *Warrings*, *Wheelers*, and other half improved geniuses, of whom it may be said, as of the poet's lines—

"Lord, Fanny spins a thousand such a day."

"Dr. WINTHROP had amassed a vast treasure of knowledge and wisdom. He was not only excellent in his own profession, but he was a *general* and *universal scholar*. I know of no part of academical literature with which he was not well acquainted. He was certainly well skilled in the three learned languages—he wrote *latin* with purity and elegance, and few surpassed him in *hebrew*—and it is said, he was versed in several modern European languages. He understood the theology of the three first centuries, for he had read almost all the fathers. He was acquainted with the *spirit of laws*, had a good general idea of the *jus civile*, and the law of nature and nations. He had deeply studied the *policies of antiquity*, and modern kingdoms, republics and empires. He had examined the *philosophy*, the wisdom and literature of Egypt, Chaldea and Athens; and had weighed, as in a balance, the literary characters from *Thales* to *Newton*. He not only treasured up the knowledge of others, but by an effort and penetration of genius, he could *originate* knowledge. From a falling stone in a garden, *Newton* by a flash of genius saw, and reasoned out the power that contained in her orbit the nocturnal moon then shining over him; and illuminating his nightly contemplations. By an effort of genius, *Franklin* investigated the pointed electrical rods, and Eliot the art of making *sand iron*, as did *Harvey* and *Bradly* the circulation of blood, and the aberration of light. By a similar effort of genius, Doctor *Winthrop* saw, and demonstrated the quantity of matter in the nucleus of a comet, from the diameter of it's capillitium, in a theory grand and entirely his own, a theory and investigation which will be approved and admired by future astronomers, and immortalize it's author beyond any of his other labors. But—whither does my pen carry me? in admiring one of the lights of the universe!"

An ELEGY on the late Professor WINTHROP.

By a Gentleman, formerly his Pupil.

YE Sons of HARVARD ! who by *Winthrop* taught,
Can travel round each planetary sphere ;
And, wing'd with his rapidity of thought,
Trace all the movements of the rolling year ;
Drop on his urn the tribute of a tear.

Ye, whom the love of Geometry inspir'd,
To chase coy Science through each winding maze ;
Whose breasts were with Newtonian ardor fir'd,
Catch'd by his sparks, and kindled at his blaze :
In grateful sighs, ejaculate his praise.

Ye philosophic souls ! whose thoughts can trace
The wonders of the architect divine,
Through depths beneath—o'er nature's verdant face,
Where meteors play—where constellations shine ;
Heave the deep groan—and mix your tears with mine.

Ye tenants of the happy seats above !
Welcome this late inhabitant of clay,
From hostile factions, to the realms of love,
Where he may bask in everlasting day.
Ye kindred spirits waft him in his way.

When in their sockets, suns shall blaze their last ;
Their fuel wasted, and extinct their light :
And worlds, torn piecemeal by the final blast,
Subside in chaos and eternal night :

He still shall shine

In youth divine,

And soaring on cherubic wing,
Shall like an ardent Seraph blaze,
And in unceasing raptures, to his maker's praise,
Eternal Hallelujahs sing.

AN ELEGY ON THE LATE P. LESTER WINTHROP.

By a Gentleman, formerly his Fellow.

Y E Sons of Harvard, who by Wintthrop
Can travel round each place of London
And wing'd with his rapidity of thought
Trace all the movements of the rolling year
Drop on his urn the tribute of a tear
Ye whom the love of Geometry taught
To trace by Science's thread each winding maze
Whole details were with Newton's color fill'd
Which by his genius and kindled in his place
In natural light's circulation trail'd
Geological fields! whole numbers can trace
The wonders of the earth's vast face
To high depths beneath—over nature's vestment trace
Where meteorology—where conceptions shine
Leave the deep stream—and mix your tears with mine
Ye rears of the lofty dome above
Whom the late inhabitant of clay
From hostile nations, from the shades of love
Where he lay, and in the way
As kindred spirits we shall place in hall
When in their looks that hall place shall fall
A new light shed, and give a cheer bright
And wonder soon be met in the good hall
Society in cheer and social night
The hall shall shine
In your domain
And for ever on the dome shall shine
Shall live an ancient Saxon place
And in needling capures, to his maker's praise
Eternal Hallelujahs sing.

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